

30 Minutes: The Benefits of Daily Activity for Life

We are all familiar with the old saying, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” While a healthy diet continues to be important, a more contemporary adage might be, “Thirty minutes a day keeps the doctor away.”

Consider the top five diseases in the United States: Cancer, diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis, and stroke. The risk for developing each of these diseases is significantly reduced by engaging in 30 minutes of moderate exercise every day.

Still not convinced? Let’s look at some data; it’s impressive. With 30 minutes of moderate exercise (3 to 8 MET activities), we can:

- Reduce the number of deaths from heart disease by 30 percent in this country alone (30 minutes walking 3 to 4 mph).
- Reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes by 58 percent for those at high risk.
- Reduce the risk of stroke by 24 percent walking 2.5 hours per week or by 46 percent by walking 5 hours per week as compared to non-exercisers.
- Reduce the risk of pancreatic cancer among overweight individuals.
- Reduce the risk of depression among elderly adults. In elderly adults classified with major depressive disorder, a 50-percent reduction of the disorder occurred after 4 months of an exercise program.
- Reduce the risk of breast cancer by 20 percent in White and African-American women who regularly exercise at 7 to 15 METs compared to inactive females.
- Reduce the risk of osteoporosis.
- Reduce blood pressure and improve overall aerobic fitness and functional capacity.

There is not a less expensive, more universally available prescription for disease management than exercise. Thirty minutes a day is a small price for such radical changes, and you can pay your dues in one bout of 30 minutes, two bouts of 15 minutes, or three bouts of 10 minutes.

Not sure what to do? Whatever you do, get up, get moving—run, walk, jump, and play—doctor’s orders!

Data collated by S. Tepper, PhD, and M. Baughman, FitTest Solutions